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FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7196  
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0732  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0527  
RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA PRIORITY 0334  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1249  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 1645  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0358  
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 0240  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1349  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 4321  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 0384  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2216  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 1324  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1881  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2167  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 8355  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 2308  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0714  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 4483

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TZ, UK, UNAUS, ECON, IT

SUBJECT: ITALY: ETHIOPIA-ERITREA AT AN IMPASSE, REGIONAL  
DISCUSSIONS COULD HELP

REF: A. STATE 14111

[1](#)B. SCHOFIELD-DERETIC E-MAILS

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor David D. Pearce for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Poloff met with Horn of Africa Office Director Fabrizio Pignatelli and Ethiopia-Eritrea Desk Officer Alberto La Bella February 9 to discuss the role the GOI intends to play in the Ethiopia-Eritrea boundary dispute, as per Ref A. Pignatelli and La Bella reported that Italy sees the situation as essentially frozen, with the two leaders entrenched in their positions (Ref B). According to Pignatelli, when Italian PM Prodi raised the issue with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki his response was that the issue was closed. Similarly, Ethiopian PM Meles repeated Addis Ababa's standard line when PM Prodi suggested that a goodwill gesture from Ethiopia expressing willingness to move forward on the issue could be helpful.

[1](#)2. (C) La Bella thought it might be possible to involve the two parties in a regional dialogue, perhaps focusing on regional economic cooperation. This was an idea the EU had considered, and EU Commissioner for Development and Aid Louis Michel had raised it in a recent trip to Djibouti. According to Pignatelli, while Eritrea had repeatedly rejected the idea of bilateral dialogue, Afwerki had said he was ready to discuss everything but the boundary in a multilateral context. Pignatelli suggested that an IGAD could be a useful forum. The appointment of a new UN Special Representative might also be helpful, Pignatelli added, since Eritrea viewed the process by which the current acting representative was appointed to be problematic. Pignatelli noted that the GOI had also supported a new role for the UN Secretary General, now that Kofi Annan's mandate had ended (though Eritrea's general bias against UN involvement would have to be overcome).  
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